

east side of the canyon. This ridge links with a ridge he had climbed previously, making a route of more than 800m. Cindy, Brad, Neil, and I, followed by a second team of John and Roger, climbed the 600m ridge of Friendly Buttress (UIAA V-), a potential classic taking the easiest route from the canyon floor. The next objective for Adrian's team was the steeper, more compact buttress to the left of Friendly Buttress. This gave the fantastic Manaschi Rib (British HVS), a 14-pitch route, which Adrian declared was the best rock climb he had ever done. John, Neil, and I now turned to the untouched east-facing side of the canyon, wading the river to climb the huge spur running up to the highest point. Though not sustained, Eastern Spine gave some interesting British 5a pitches and serious climbing on a loose headwall.

Vladimir had been exploring another canyon to the west of Son Kul, and this gave John and me our final route, the impressive groove of Striker (E2 5c), while Adrian rounded off the trip by climbing a small pinnacle in the canyon, on immaculate limestone, at E1. We left more impressed than ever with Son Kul Canyon and eager, as always, for our next trip to Kyrgyzstan.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, ALPINE CLUB

## TENGRI TAG

*Pik Pobeda (7,439m), north face to west ridge.* At the end of August, Russians Vitaly Gorelik and Gleb Sokolov made the first ascent of the north face of the formation known as the Camel on the west ridge of Pik Pobeda. The objective dangers on the lower section of the 2,400m mixed buttress on Pobeda, climbed alpine-style in seven and a half days, were high, and the pair had spent several years trying for the right conditions before setting foot on the route. Steep sections of technical ice and mixed climbing were made more difficult by poor weather on the upper part of the wall. On reaching the west ridge, close to two snow humps, the pair continued to a high point of 6,950m. They did not go to the main summit but descended the standard Medzmariashvili route (5B) over the top of Pobeda West (Pik Pavel Pshavel, 6,918m) and down its north ridge to Dikiy Pass. This ascent was nominated for a 2010 Piolets d'Or. Sokolov, who was nearly 56 at the time of the ascent, has written a full account that appears earlier in the *Journal*.

## KAZAKHSTAN

### ZHUNGAR ALATAU

*Kyoabl-Kapacau and Tblwkah valleys, various ascents.* Landing at Almaty on August 2, Liam Hughes, Paul Padman, John Temple, Stuart Worsfold, and I were met by Andrey Gundarev, our happily laid-back interpreter, and whisked to a monolithic hotel. It was a concrete throwback to Soviet times, and if you listened carefully, I'm sure you could hear the shouts of the party faithful echoing through the empty corridors. But it did the job. Next morning, after buying a few essentials, we set out on our 350km drive across the Kazakh steppe. After six hours on relatively good roads, passing through a military base and a military checkpoint, the six of us, with Uliya Polyakova, our beautiful base-camp manager and cook, reached the roadhead above Sary-

abel and contemplated the southern Zhungar Alatau, which rose in front of us for 3,000m. The Zhungar doesn't do foothills: it changes from football-pitch-flat, desiccated steppe to 4,000m alpine peaks in less than 2km. The contrast is extraordinary.

We were enthusiastic about climbing peaks on which no one had set foot. The Zhungar was particularly attractive, as there were no records (or knowledge) of mountaineering activity in the southern sector. We had old military maps but practically no other information. It was a great feeling. Three heavy carries and six river crossings later, we established our first camp just above the confluence of two rivers, the Kyoabl–Kapacau and Tblwkah. We had arrived. The next day three groups set out in different directions, trying to find the best way to penetrate farther into the range. After dubious navigation and adventurous river crossings by some

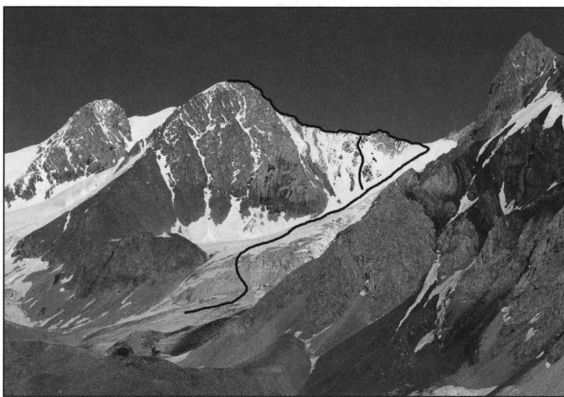
and opportune discoveries by others, particularly the “Padman Traverse,” we returned to camp. None of the routes we discovered was suitable for carrying heaving loads, so we renamed our camp base camp, though it was 1,000 vertical meters and 8km from the planned site.

With four days food, we followed the Padman Traverse into the Kyoabl–Kapacau Valley, avoiding four river crossings. For much of the way we moved at snail's pace, slowed by loose, steep shale, chest-deep scratchy juniper, and torrential rain. We made barely a kilometer an hour. Higher the going got easier and we eventually set up camp on a large green plateau at 3,156m, surprised to find two derelict huts resembling garden sheds. Over the next three days we summited six peaks, one of the most lovely being Julie Tau. On reaching the summit ridge, we were greeted with a stupendous panorama of the steppe and 278km away, poking above the curvature of the earth, was the mighty spike of Khan Tengri (6,995m); it was stunning. The weather during our stay in this most beautiful of valleys was largely good, and all the ascents we made were around PD in standard.

After a rest and celebratory cake at base camp, we took five days food and headed up the Tblwkah, where we had originally intended to establish base camp. After two days we set up camp on grass at 3,000m, among a herd of feisty horses. The weather was mixed for a few days, but we managed some climbing, notably Ak Tau, the whitest peak in the valley, and Jasmine Tau, a stunning triangle at its head. The return to base included a night around a campfire



Ak Tau, showing line of first ascent. *Jamie Goodhart*



Julie Tau, showing the two routes ascended. *Jamie Goodhart*



Unclimbed rock walls above Tblwkah-Kaupakmbi confluence. *Jamie Goodhart*



Jasmine Tau. Padman and Worsfold climbed behind right skyline ridge, following a gully to ca 20m from summit, where they saw a survey cross. *Jamie Goodhart*

below a spectacular rock face near the Tblwkah-Kaupakmbi confluence. There was much speculation on the fantastic potential of the area for alpinism, rock climbing and particularly ski touring. The snow is rumored to be consistent throughout winter, though the cold will be severe. In summer, we recommend that future parties set a higher base camp, using hired horses, which can certainly reach at least 3,100m.

We spent 17 days in the region and climbed 16 peaks, which we mostly named ourselves (potential first ascents marked with \*): Pk. 2,664m, (N 44°30.263', E 80°07.010', Goodhart-Hughes, August 4); Kapacau (2,528m, N 44°30.446', E 80°06.188', Goodhart-Hughes, August 4); First Hurrah\* (3,939m, N 44°34.968', E 80°07.081', Goodhart-Hughes-Padman-Worsfold, August 6); Julie Tau\* (3,996m, N 44°34.144', E 80°07.444', Goodhart-Hughes-Padman-Worsfold-Temple, August 7); Mt. Caroline\* (3,905m, N 44°34.777' E 80°05.437',

Goodhart-Hughes, August 8); The Cairn\* (3,910m, N 44°34.736', E 80°05.228', Goodhart-Hughes, August 8); Tash Tau\* (3,877m, N 44°34.736', E 80°05.228', Goodhart-Hughes, August 8); Christaline Peaks\* (3,956m N 44°3507', E 80°0544.9'; 3,896m, N 44°3456.4', E 80°0542.1'; 3,847m, N 44°3456.5', E 80°0551.4', Padman-Worsfold, August 8); Pk. 3,638m (ca N 44°30', E 80°10', Gundarev-Polyakova, August 9); The Cross (3,877m, N 44°34.193', E 80°12.374', Goodhart-Hughes, August 12); Ak Tau\* (4,162m, N 44°32.126', E 80°14.513', Goodhart-Hughes, August 13); Jasmine Tau (4,042m, N 44°3416', E 80°1440.3' Padman-Worsfold, August 13); Fern Tau\* (3,623m, west of Ak Tau, Temple, August 13); Pk. 3,821m (N 44°32.126', E 80°14.513', Goodhart-Hughes, August 17); Bnanmoctb (3,865m, north-northwest of Pk. 3,821m, Gundarev-Polyakova, August 18), and Tut Tau\* (4,080m, northeast of Julie Tau, Padman-Worsfold, August 18).

It was clear that some of the peaks had been climbed (some even sported survey cairns), but nine gave no indication of previous ascent (rocky summits without cairns). I am working on the premise that one-third of our ascents were new, though it will be almost impossible to verify this.

Military border permits and base camp logistics were provided by Kan Tengri ([www.kantengri.kz](http://www.kantengri.kz)). Thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation for financial assistance.

JAMIE GOODHART, *Alpine Club*